DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 254 390 RC 015 216

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TITLE A Behavior Management Training Model for Parents of Minority Group Handicapped Children.
SPONS AGENCY Western New Mexico Univ., Silver City.
PUB DATE Mar 85
NOTE 18p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; Disabilities; *Hispanic Americans; Mexican Americans; *Minority Groups; Models; *Parent Education; *Parent Participation; *Parent School Relationship; Parent Workshops; Questionnaires; Special Education
IDENTIFIERS *Behavior Management; *Spanish Surnamed; United States (Southwest)

ABSTRACT

Utilizing a workshop format, 10 Spanish-surnamed parents of minority group handicapped children were introduced to techniques in behavior management thus allowing them to become actively involved in the educational process. The parents (8 females and 2 males, ranging in age from 20 to 45 years) were identified by the school as minority and as having children in a special education program in the local public schools. Conducted in an area identified as being lower to middle class in socioeconomic status in the southwestern United States, the training program used three audio cassettes (filmstrips) sequentially presenting the concepts of behavior management. Parents were encouraged to speak and become actively involved in discussions, activities, and practical experiences. Activities and discussions were conducted in English and/or Spanish to allow parents to communicate in the language most comfortable to them. Parents were individually administered a pre- and post-test and were given a Parent Feedback Form during the last day of the workshop. Pre- and post-test data revealed that the training program was successful in teaching basic behavior management principles to parents. The feedback form showed positive comments regarding the workshop as to time, subject, material, and presentations. (NQA)

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ED254390

A Behavior Management Training Model for Parents of Minority Group Handicapped Children

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MARCH 1985

Funds for this study were provided by Faculty Grant No. 833.
Western New Mexico University, Silver City, NM.

RC015216

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Introduction

The overwhelming number of studies done on the effect of parental influence on the socialization of children, gives strong support to the importance of involving parents in educational activities of the school (Fantini & Cardenas, 1980; Laosa, 1978, 1977; Fanning, 1977; Meadows & Meadows, 1971). Attitudes towards appropriate school behaviors develop in the home to the extent they are reinforced by the parents. As a result, children often reflect their parents' attitudes in certain matters, especially those concerning school (Rutherford & Edgar, 1979; Cooper & Edgar, 1978; Kroth, 1975). Parental involvement, therefore, is a valuable resource whose full potential has not yet been realized (Rodriguez, 1981). However, for many minority group parents, the goal of being actively involved in their children's school is unattainable at present. The major reason that these parents will not become involved in their children's school is that many educators nurture the attitude that minority group parents are uninterested in the academic progress of their children, thus are unwilling to participate in any school-related activites. Educators, therefore, are hesitant to solicit participation since they feel certain they will fail. In spite of legislative mandates emphasizing parental involvement, i.e., P.L. 94-142, educators are still reluctant to include parents, particularly minority group parents, in any decision-making activities of the school. The failure to involve minority group parents in educational policy-making activities of a school, represents a tremendous loss in human resources for the parent, the child, the minority group to which he or she belongs, and the school as a whole.

Schools Must Initiate the Efforts

American public education operating under the "Melting Pot" theory has failed to provide culturally democratic educational environments. A new social philosophy must be formulated if schools are ever to meet the educational needs of culturally and linguistically different minority group children. The basis

for this reformulation is implied in the concept of cultural democracy, that is, right of every American child to remain identified with his own home/community socialization experience regardless of whether these experiences are designated ethnic, cultural, or social (Castaneda, 1976).

Some investigators have reported that most minority group children are at a disadvantage in the traditional Anglo-oriented educational system (Prieto & Zucker, 1981; Mercer & Lewis, 1979). They state that these children are restricted in educational opportunities since the school is not meeting their educational needs as the students and parents view them. The result has been treatment of culturally and linguistically minority group children as different, deviant, and consequently exceptional (Samuda, 1976).

The lack of attention to the diverse educational needs of culturally and linguistically different children has perpetualized the self-fulfilling prophecy in regard to academic failure of minorities (Almanza & Mosley, 1980). That is to say, lack of success creates more failure, which in turn generates anxiety and frustrations, which eventually culminates in the destruction of self-concept (Fuchigami, 1980). For example, in a report prepared by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1974), studying Mexican-American education, it was reported that for every 10 Mexican-American children entering first grade, only 6 remain in school and graduate. In contrast, nearly 9 of every 10 Anglo children remain in school and receive a high school diploma. In addition, a study of student achievement in Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas reported that; (1) 15.9% of Mexican-American children repeated first grade; (2) in the eighth-grade, 58% of Black-Americans, and 64% Mexican-Americans were reading below grade level (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1971). In addition, on the basis of data from the Bureau of the Census, it was stated that median school years completed by Black-Americans and Native-Americans was 9.8 and 8.1 for Mexican-Americans (Banks, 1979). Furthermore, in Colorado during the 1975-1976 school year, of the 150,262 minority group children in public school

grades 10 to 12, 11,646 dropped out of school (The Chicano Education Project, 1978). Data from the Civil Rights Survey (1978) revealed that Arizona, California, Colorado and New Mexico had proportional discrepancies of minority group children, particularly Hispanic, in programs for the Educable Mentally Retarded (EMR). For example, in Colorado Hispanics represent 15% of the total school population but 25% in programs for the Educable Mentally Retarded. New Mexico reported that Hispanics constitute 42% of the total school enrollment yet 57% in programs for the Educable Mentally Retarded; Arizona 22% and 31%; and California with 21% and 27% respectively. Although these figures are based on observations in the Southwest, it is reasonable to expect similar conditions occur wherever significant minority populations exist.

Need for Minority Group Parent Involvement

A number of reasons have been discussed for this educational calamity. Among these is that limited proficiency in English language has a negative influence on children's learning capacities since the ability to communicate is restrained (Baca & Cervantes, 1984). In addition, some investigators have raised serious issues regarding the use of standardized psychological assessment measures with culturally and linguistically different minority group children (Hillard, 1980; Bernal, 1979). Others have discussed the issue in terms of educational limitations due to "budgetary deficiencies" (Clark & Plotkin, 1972). Some have discussed the affect of negative teacher attitudes on the academic achievement of minority group children (Bergin, 1980). Finally, some authors state that parental involvement in the educational processes of school is critical to the academic success or failure of children, particularly minority group children (Rodriguez, 1981; Arciniega, Casaus & Castillo, 1978). These authors point out that parent conferences provide school personnel with knowledge of language usage in the home, expectations and perceptions of the parents, and general home situations, thus allowing more information to be included in an instructional design. Still other authors have voiced concerns

regarding the lack of minority group parent involvement in school. They state that many of these parents lack the necessary communication skills with the English language, therefore, feel inadequate and uniformed. These authors point out that many minority group parents view school through their own past experiences with the system. Problems of classroom conflict, teacher insensitivity, frustration, low academic achievement and high dropout rates among minorities were issues then as they are today. As a result, most minority group parents avoid any contact with school which in turn brings about negative attitudes from some teachers and administrators. The devastating result affects the child who suffers when parents and teachers work a crosspaths, each pulling different ways (Rodriguez, 1982; Rich, 1980).

Methods

Subjects. The study was conducted in an area identified as being lower to middle class in socio-economic status in the Southwestern United States. The population of the schools and the neighborhoods surrounding them are predominantly Spanish-surnamed.

The sample included 10 Spanish-surnamed adults who had been randomly selected and identified by the school as minority and who had children assigned to a special education program in the local public school district.

The sample was comprised of 8 females and 2 males whose chronological age ranged from 20 years to 45 years with a mean C.A. of 31 years (SD 11.1).

Instruments. Managing Behavior - A Parent Involvement Program (McDowell, 1974) introduces parents to techniques in behavior management thus allowing them to become actively involved in the educational process. This is accomplished through the use of three audio cassettes (filmstrips) sequentially presenting the concepts of behavior management.

Procedure. The training program was conducted using a workshop format (see appendix 1). By using this type of format, the parents became participants rather than observers. Each parent was encouraged to speak and become actively

involved in discussions, activities and practical experiences. Ample time was allotted for presentation of filmstrips, activities and discussions that followed. Parents were accorded "breaks" as needed. Usually, two ten-minute breaks were allowed per session.

The parents were individually administered a pre and post-test (see appendix 2). Also a Parent Feedback Form was given to the parent during the last day of the workshop (see appendix 3).

Results. Parents' pre and post scores are found in Table 1. Parents' scores on the pre-test ranged from 9 - 13 with a mean score of 10.9 (SD 1.37). Post-test results showed that the parents received the maximum score allowed on the test, which was 15 correct responses.

A t - test analysis was calculated between pre and post-test means. The resulting data showed a $t = 9.46$ (d.f. = 9). This was highly significant at the .01 level.

The Parent Feedback Form showed positive comments regarding the workshop in regards to time, subject, material and presentations. All 10 subjects participated in completing the form.

Table 1

Results of Parents on Pre and Post Testing

Subject	*Pre-test	*Post-test
1	10	15
2	11	15
3	10	15
4	10	15
5	13	15
6	13	15
7	10	15
8	9	15
9	12	15
10	11	15

*Note. Maximum score = 15 $t = 9.46$ df.9 **$p < .01$

Discussion. Although the information obtained from this study cannot and should not be the definite answer to procedures needed for involving minority group parents, it does, however, provide some interesting information that warrants serious examination.

For example, when examining the performance of the subjects on the pre-test, seven parents scored eleven or less correct responses on the instrument. In comparison, post-test data revealed that all ten parents received the maximum correct responses allowed. This becomes an extremely interesting point since only four of the ten parents had completed high school. This finding lends contradiction to existing notions the minority group parents, particularly those from non-English speaking homes, demonstrate a low level of involvement because of lack of communicational skills in English and are less capable of assisting their children with homework assignments. It should be noted that discussions and other activities were conducted in English and/or Spanish. By allowing the parents to communicate in the language most comfortable to them proved to be an incentive for participation. This brings an interesting point of discussion. Research has shown that a large percentage of bilingual people, through the process of cross-cultural contract (i.e., Spanish with English), develop the use of two languages to convey social meaning. This linguistic pattern is referred to as code-switching or alternation of two languages and provides the mechanism by which communicative competence is achieved. Some authors have stated that code-switching permits expression of trust and self-worth, thus increasing motivation (Wentz and McClure, 1980). Others postulate that code-switching provides an environment that virtually eliminates linguistic barriers, thereby, promoting communication and participation (Genishi, 1978). Research done in the area of metalinguistics provides us with further support for the contention that the use of two languages is an intellectual asset and not a deficit as once believed (Cazden, 1972). Eight of the participants in the study used code-switching interchangeably as a means of communication.

Traditionally, there exists some serious concerns regarding minority group parent involvement. A common point of view is that many minority parents are uninterested, less caring and do not view participation in school - related activities as critical to their children's educational future. This author initially contacted fifty parents and invited them to participate. Only ten of the fifty parents actually participated in the workshop. This finding suggests that the potential for positive parent involvement of minority group parents is well within the parimeters of a school. However, some parents will require more extensive efforts before interest is demonstrated. This point is further clarified by the attitude nurtured by some parents who in the past had negative experiences with the school, therefore, view these efforts as meaningless.

In addition, comments made by the parents on the Parent Feedback Form revealed interest, motivation and a strong desire to continue such activities in the future. This finding reinforces the statement made earlier that parents can become actively involved participants in their children's educational future.

In summary, pre and post-test data revealed that the training program was successful in teaching basic behavior management principles to parents. Scores on the post-test reflect the notion that these minority group parents demonstrated a high degree of motivation to succeed.

Conclusion. It is evident that some minority group parents, particularly Hispanic, have a positive attitude towards developing skill in working with their children in positive ways. Therefore, more efficient efforts must be initiated by the school to involve minority group parents. The data from this study presents a method which will hopefully establish positive interaction procedures between schools and minority group parents, thus bettering the educational process of minority group handicapped children in public school settings. Data from this study revealed that parents of minority group children demonstrated interest in becoming effective and active participants in their children's educational future, at least at the elementary level.

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Appendix

Appendix 1

A Behavior Management Training Model for Parents
of Minority Handicapped Children

Schedule

Place	Presentation	Time
(Monday)	A. Introduction to Exceptionalities: 1. Definitions 2. Characteristics B. Pre-Test C. Discussion	7:00-9:50 p.m.
(Tuesday)	*A. Parent Training (P-1) B. Activity (Group) C. Discussion	7:00-9:50 p.m.
(Wednesday)	*A. Parent Training (P-2) B. Activity (Group) C. Discussion	7:00-9:50 p.m.
(Thursday)	*A. Parent Training (P-3) B. Activity (Group) C. Discussion	7:00-9:50 p.m.
(Friday)	A. Follow-up and synopsis of Parent Training Model (Part 1, 2 & 3) B. Role Playing & Practical Activity (Group) C. Discussion D. Post Test	7:00-9:50 p.m.

*Source - Managing Behavior - A Parent Involvment Program, by Dr. R.L. McDowell

Date _____

Appendix 2

Managing Behavior
A Parent Involvement
Program

1. What is a "target behavior"?

2. While learning how to use Behavior Management, one must work on _____ behavior at a time.

3. A technique that is used to help determine whether or not a behavior is changing, is called _____.

4. The _____ that parents place on their children have a powerful, influence on their children's behavior.

5. When a material reward, i.e. candy, is gradually withdrawn, the process is called _____.

6. The major method used to change or manage behavior is through the use of _____.

7. A very important consideration that you as a behavior manager should keep in mind is to be _____.

8. The technique in which two consequences are presented at the same time is called _____.

9. If a behavior is rewarded, chances are the behavior will be _____.

10. _____ refers to a period of time during which you record your child's behavior.

11. Using "time sampling" requires recording the number of _____ it takes to complete a behavior.

12. When several behaviors are occurring at the same time, select the behavior that is _____ to you.

13. Event recording refers to how many _____ the behavior occurs.

14. A _____ is anything that a person does that can be seen and counted.

15. Behavior Modification is a process in which we _____ a behavior or behaviors.

Appendix 3

Parent Education Workshop

Feedback Form

Title_____ Name of leader(s)_____

Dates_____ No. of sessions_____

Time of day_____ Day of week_____

Circle the answer that best applies:

1. Time

A. The day of the week was: a) good b) not the best c) bad

B. The hour of the day was: a) too early b) too late c) alright

C. The length of the session was: a) too long b) a little too long c) about right d) too short

D. The number of sessions was: a) too few b) about right c) a little too many d) way too many

2. Subject material

A. The material covered was: a) too broad b) a little too broad c) about right d) a little too narrow

B. The material presented was: a) too easy b) about right b) sometimes too hard d) too hard

C. The material was: a) very helpful to me b) somewhat helpful to me c) not very helpful to me d) not of any help to me

D. What I learned was or will be: a) very helpful to my child b) somewhat helpful to my child c) not helpful to my child d) not related to my child

3. Presentation(s)

Circle all of the words that apply to the presentation.

dull, clear, exciting, confusing, unorganized, helpful handouts, interesting, weak, warm, friendly, cold, strong, soft, well organized, comfortable, uneasy.

4. Comments:

Good things:

Poor things:

Suggestions: